

AFTER THE FLOOD, “WHAT SHALL I DO?”



Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to your radio, TV, or NOAA Weather Radio and don't return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance -- infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities. The following safety tips should be taken prior to you entering your home.

Inspect the foundation of your home for cracks or other damage. Examine walls, floors, doors, and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.

- * Watch for loose plaster and ceilings that could fall.
- * Stay out of buildings if floodwaters remain around the building.
- * Take pictures of the damage -- both to the house and its contents for insurance claims.
- * Throw away food--including canned goods--that has come in contact with floodwaters.
- * Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
- * Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are health hazards.
- * Check for sewage and water line damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid the water from the tap.
- * Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open the window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason it must be turned back on by a professional.

- * Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician for advice.

Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division